

STATEMENT BY JOHN B. TAYLOR
UNDER SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
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Good morning and thank you for joining me today.

I am very pleased to be visiting Haiti at this important time. President Bush takes a strong interest in seeing Haiti succeed. During my visit, I was impressed by the steps that the government of Haiti is taking to improve the lives of its citizens after a very difficult period.

The United States has been working with our partners in the international community to support the efforts of the government. Over the past few weeks, donors have come together to produce a comprehensive needs assessment to help guide development activities. Later this month a group of donor countries and organizations will meet in Washington to raise funding to jumpstart economic reconstruction, increase economic growth, create jobs, and raise living standards in Haiti.

It is important that donors and the Haitian government not repeat the mistakes of the past, when large commitments of funding failed to generate improvements in the lives of the Haitian people. The United States is committed to working with the government and the international community to make sure that this time projects in all sectors have concrete targets and timelines designed to produce tangible results for Haiti's people.

This morning I met with Prime Minister Latortue – with whom I met previously in Washington – and he updated me on the reforms his administration is undertaking. I congratulated the Prime Minister on his administration's leadership in collecting revenues and managing the government's fiscal affairs responsibly, without recourse to inflationary financing that has been so destructive in the past. The Prime Minister also underlined his commitment to fighting corruption, increasing transparency, and expediting the execution of development projects.

The Prime Minister and I also discussed the importance of the role of the private sector in Haiti – a topic I also had the opportunity to discuss with representatives of the business community as well as with the finance minister, the planning minister, and the central bank governor. There is general agreement that while it is essential to address Haiti's urgent social needs, raising living standards requires job creation. Only businesses themselves can create the jobs that lift families out of poverty. The government must do its part to create an environment that encourages entrepreneurs and small businesses by simplifying regulation, promoting a strong financial sector that broadens access to credit, and investing in infrastructure.

Improving Haiti's road network was frequently mentioned as a high priority. I am certain that this objective will be a focus for donors as we meet to discuss Haiti's funding needs later this month. Clearly, transportation systems are vitally important for a country's

economic growth, allowing goods to get to market, children to get to school, and people to get to jobs and access services, as efficiently and safely as possible.

Before I leave, I will also visit a World Bank health project in the pediatrics center in the Port-au-Prince General Hospital, which provides grant assistance to treat malnutrition in infants and children. This project shows the kind of visible impact that grants can have in meeting urgent needs.

The people of Haiti deserve a chance to experience the benefits of economic growth. Because of mistakes in the past, Haiti has lagged behind its neighbors. The United States looks forward to working with the people of Haiti to make the best of this new opportunity.